

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

PAUL A PRISONER—IN ROME.*

By Rev. J. M. Duncan, D.D.

The brethren, came to meet us, v. 15. At a critical moment in a great battle, a certain regiment was lying down in a dense wood. For a time the firing had ceased, and there was a tense silence. The hearts of the men were filled with a nameless fear, and a complete collapse seemed imminent, when suddenly a bird in the woods sent forth a joyous trill of song. Instantly the soldiers in their agony of suspense thought of their names and little ones, and of all that depended on their remaining firm. Their confidence came back, and when the enemy's attack was renewed, it rolled back like the waves dashing upon the immovable rock. A word or a handshake of encouragement may help one who is ready to faint, to go forward with new energy and hope. It is so easy to cheer others, and it may help so much.

By himself with the soldier that guarded him (Rev. Ver.), v. 16. There was a college professor who frequently told in the class-room of thoughts that had come to him in his garden. The thoughts were often so beautiful that the students, none of whom had ever seen the professor in his home, pictured the garden as a very Eden—luscious and with a glory of trees and flowers. One day, two of the students made an excuse to visit the professor and get a glimpse, if possible, of the garden. They were taken into the garden, which, to their surprise, they found was the narrowest of strips shut in by high walls. "But, Professor," they ventured to say, "surely this is not the garden you are always talking about, in which such fine thoughts come to you?" "Oh, yes it is," was the smiling reply. "But it is so small. We had imagined quite a large garden." "But," answered the professor, pointing to the clear sky studded with stars, "see how high it is!" So long as our hearts, like Paul's, are open towards heaven, no imprisoning walls can shut its joys out of our lives.

The hope of Israel, v. 20. Right in the path of Atlantic liners, off the coast of Anglesey in Wales, is a group of dangerous rocks called the Skerries, twice each day covered by the tide. Long before the steamer reaches them, a bright point of light reveals their presence and position to those on board. A lighthouse has been placed on the dangerous spot to render the rocks harmless. God's prophets sent to Israel warned them of many dangers in their course like those rocks concealed by the rising tide. But over every place of peril there shone the light revealing the way to deliverance and safety. That light came from Him who was Israel's Hope, the long-promised and eagerly-desired Saviour. And He will lead us, too, so we only trust Him, in ways that are safe and happy.

We desire to hear, v. 22. When a railway cutting is made, the banks on either side are at first, perfectly bare—not a sign of vegetation appears on them. But presently, here and there, the seed of a thistle or a dandelion, or what not, finds a lodgement in the bare earth, and by and by the whole space is overgrown with flowers and grasses and herbs. There is no longer any emptiness. Before one could well believe it, the bare banks are covered with the products of seeds that have drifted against it by chance on the wings of the breeze. Our minds and hearts are like that railway cutting. They cannot remain unoccupied. They are always receiving, and never empty. What we hear gives substance and shape to our thoughts and desires, which, in turn,

determine our conduct and life. Our ears should ever be open to the good, and fast closed against the evil.

Persuading them concerning Jesus, v. 23. Some students at a women's college opened a class for teaching some very poor and ignorant men in the neighborhood. They read to them, they taught them reading and writing, they sang to them, and the men gathered in growing numbers. After some months they asked the men if there was anything in particular they wanted to hear more about. After a hesitating silence, one of the men replied: "Could you tell us something about the Lord Jesus Christ?" Other knowledge is valuable and important in its place, but it is needful most of all that we should know about Jesus. For only that knowledge can save us.

Some believed, some believed not, v. 24. A minister was one day conversing with a friend, and the name of a third person happened to be mentioned. "He is somewhat sceptical, I believe," said the minister. "Yes," was the reply, "and if you knew his life as well as I do, you would not be surprised." Many reject the gospel because it condemns sins in themselves which they are not willing to give up. When we are willing to do God's will, it becomes wonderfully easy to believe His words.

With all boldness (Rev. Ver.), v. 31. A young man at college had resolved to begin a new life and serve Jesus, but he was afraid to make this known to his most intimate friend. At last he mustered courage to make the confession, and, to his wondering delight, he found that his chum had come to the same decision. Each had seen a lion in the way of speaking for Jesus. But when he went boldly forward, the lion vanished.

PRAYER.

O Lord, Thou art ever the same Thy powers never fail. We thank Thee that Thou hast written this truth upon Thy works. It is not upon the surface, but as the water-mark in paper, innate, where it can never be destroyed. The leaf falls, but the life passes into the main reservoirs of the tree. The food we destroy in eating it becomes a part of our body's life. The work and sorrow of life wear out the strength of the body; but they incarnate into our character the virtues and the graces of Christ, as we do all things in His Spirit. And when the body and all things material fall us they fall from us, and let our higher life rise nearer to Thee, where all that is mortal is swallowed up of Thy life everlasting. Amen.—A. W. Lewis.

A MISSIONARY GOSPEL.

The first message at the birth of Christ was a missionary message (Luke 2:10).

The first prayer Christ taught men was a missionary prayer (Matt. 9:10). The first disciple, St. Andrew, was the first missionary (John 1:41).

The first message of the risen Lord was a missionary message (John 20:17). The first command of the risen Lord to his disciples was a missionary command (John 20:21).

The first apostolic sermon was a missionary sermon (Acts 2:17-39). Christ's great reason for Christian love was a missionary reason (John 13:35).

Christ's great reason for unity was a missionary reason (John 17:21).

The first coming of Christ was a missionary work (Luke 4:18-21).

The second coming of Christ is to be honored by missionary work (Matt. 24:14).

Our Saviour's last wish on earth was a missionary wish (Matt. 28:19).

The more we live, the more brief appear

Our lives' succeeding stages;

A day to childhood seems a year,

And years like passing ages.

—Campbell.

LIGHT FROM THE EAST.

By Rev. James Ross, D.D.

Ship of Alexandria.—The needs of two millions of people in Rome determined the course of the world's commerce; all roads led to her gates, all lines of trading ships sought her ports. Most of the carrying trade was in the hands of the Greeks, the Britons of the olden time, and while there was some commerce by land from the north, the great body of Rome's supplies came by sea. Spain sent wool for cloth, North Africa fine hardwood for furniture, and marble and granite for building. Asia Minor sent silks and spices from the Euphrates by the wharves of Ephesus, fish from the Black Sea, and wines from the Greek Archipelago. But the principal channel of trade was from Egypt and the Far East through Alexandria, the harbor of the Indian Ocean, spices, dyes, gems, gold and perfume came down the Red Sea and the Nile to the Egyptian port. And Egypt had her own manufactures of linen, paper and glass, and, most important of all, her export of wheat. The Nile Valley grew the bread of Rome, and, at some seasons of the year, any delay of the grain ships caused much suffering among the poor in the city. This line of ships created a traffic in passengers to and from the south and east; they were gathered in coasting vessels to the ports where the grain ships touched, and thence they were carried to the capital.

CHRIST IN YOU.

There must be some controlling power in every life, something that gives strength and impulse and motive and disposition to do things, that energizes and stimulates. Is it the love of gain? Is it the desire for power? Is it Christ in us the hope of glory? The things that we eat strengthen us. We rise from the table and go forth to our labor with renewed energy, with added strength. The bread in us has been the occasion of activity. Before the noon hour we were hungry, weak, and earned not to carry on our work, but with the hunger supplied we rise from the table ready for any toil. Suppose we partake of the bread of life. Suppose we have eaten of the bread that cometh down from heaven; then Christ in us becomes the source of our hope and our Christian enthusiasm.

As without the supply of our physical wants we have felt our weakness and inefficiency for the day's labor, how can we hope to do a full day's work in the vineyard of our Lord unless we have supplied our spiritual hunger by eating of that bread of which if a man eat he shall never hunger? May it not be just here that the reason lies why some are weak and sickly among us and many faint? Our hands are weak, our knees are feeble because he have not eaten at the table of the Lord. We have failed to partake of his provision. Our labor, therefore, is necessarily inefficient. We have toiled all day and have not earned our penny. We have gone up early into the vineyard to see if the vines budded and the pomegranates were in flower, but we have not seen the footprints of our Beloved. We have gone up to the mountains of myrrh and to the hills of frankincense, but the scent of Lebanon has not been ours. But to go forth with Christ! Then may we sit down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit will be sweet unto our taste. When Christ becomes the strength in us he will be the beauty and delight all about us. He will be the motive back of all our activities and the inspiration of every endeavor. His strength will be our strength, his life our life, his love our love, and the purpose of his mission will be the purpose of ours.—United Presbyterian.

* S.S. Lesson, November 14, 1909.—Acts 28: 11-24, 30, 31. Commit to memory vs. 20, 31. Study Acts 28: 11-31. Golden Text.—I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.—Romans 1: 16.